



Faces, Spaces and Tenuous Places

6 February – 13 May 2024

Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts
Wits Art Museum (WAM)



Faces, Spaces and Tenuous Places

Faces, Spaces and Tenuous Places explores portraits of people and portrayals of place and space. The book artists use the structure and materiality of the book and the carefully composed images to reveal not only the state of person or place, but also the artists' personal appreciation of and attitude to their theme.

As well as the bookworks that expose the underbelly of tense times and awkward situations, as in Judith Mason's *A Troyeville Diary*, there are counterpoints of amusing books, such as *Almost Cut my Meds* by Fred Rinne, and the poetic visions found in *Narcissus* by Barry Moser.

In all of the works, the role of colour and tonality is key; holding power and impacting our moods and emotions. Empty spaces, image to page proportion, and the density and clarity of image and text also become creative devices to signal intent.

This exhibition reinforces the critical role of image choice and manipulation, and book art materials and techniques in evoking emotion.

COVER IMAGE

Andromeda Imagined

Charles Hobson

IRIS prints from mixed media drawings, found illustrations and paper punching

1998



The stars provide a pattern – once one point is fixed, it can be used to mark another. As the pattern emerges it gradually broadens and strengthens; and while completely arbitrary, it offers guidance – a way to navigate. In a more complex way, the Greek myths represent a way of charting or dealing with puzzling and unknown aspects of life – animal urges and sexuality, the vagaries of the seasons (flood and drought, for example) human frailty, heroism, altruism, insoluble dilemmas – the capriciousness of life. In this book, Hobson juxtaposes drawings from the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. On the left are illustrations made in 1690 for the star atlas of Johannes Helvelius. Opposite them, are the artist's own figure studies. Each carries the shape of the constellation from the Andromeda myth but in different ways. The star pattern has been punched in the Helvelius figures. And, if you read the book with a strong lamp over your left shoulder, the shape of the constellation will also be cast on the figure drawings. This book is read on top of Sergej Vutuc's *Čista Zona /* (see entry #04 below).

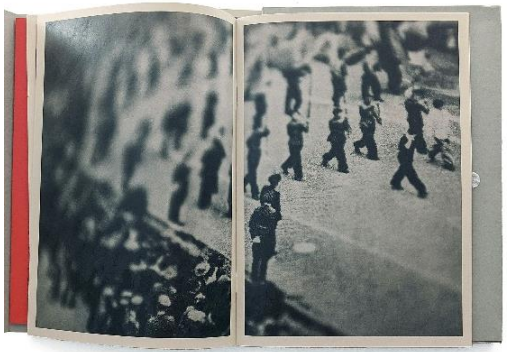


What is affect?

First recorded in 1350–1400; Middle English, from Latin affectus “acted upon, subjected to; mental or emotional state” (past participle and action noun of afficere), equivalent to af- “toward” + fec- (combining form of facere “to make, do”) + -tus action noun suffix or -tus past participle suffix; see af-

Used as a verb (in relation to an object – the bookworks and/or images on the exhibition), the term means: ‘to act on; produce an effect or change in an observer’. It also means ‘to impress the mind or move the feelings of the observer’.

As a noun it is used to express the psychology of feeling or emotion generally, and as an expressed or observed emotional response.

The curators have chosen books or particular openings in books that seem to promote or induce affective responses to the subjects depicted. These books or page-openings evoked a ‘pang’ when first encountered and were thus chosen for display. It is this experience – depicted through images of portraits and the body; places, environments and spaces – that the curators wish to share in this diverse exhibition.

01		<p><i>Soviet Onion</i> Clifton Meador Boone, NC 2021</p> <p>Photobooks were a ubiquitous form of propaganda in the Soviet Union—photo albums of famous cities and regions, souvenirs of internal tourism; these books intended as souvenirs or gifts. But hidden within these bland visual books are layers of mythic narratives of suspicion, exploitation, greed, envy, and control. Before the Soviet Union fell apart, it was always spinning apart.</p>
02		<p><i>Dust Memories</i> Aaron Hughes Booklyn Artists Alliance, Brooklyn, NY 2008</p> <p><i>Dust Memories</i> is a visual representation of the ambiguous and anxious moments of a deployment with the 1244th Transportation Company in support of combat operations in Iraq. The book is conceived as a repeating cycle, which is a metaphor to trauma's continually recurring thoughts and represents a journey that is still being carried out by soldiers in the world today.</p>
03		<p><i>Lost Volume: A Catalogue of Disasters</i> Cornelia Parker Book Works, London 1993</p> <p><i>Lost Volume: A Catalogue of Disasters</i> uses the intimate form of the book to present several flattened objects that – through the use of trompe-l’oeil – appear to have been squashed between the pages of the book. Parker crushes these selected objects in a press between sheets of heavy paper, creating embossed indentations and reducing the objects to two-dimensional representations of their former three-dimensional selves. The selected objects are seemingly unconnected; a contents page that includes objects not flattened in the book confuses matters further. The book is perhaps best read as a way of seeing objects – and the world – in a new light.</p>

04



Čista Zona / Insta 30ha

Sergej Vutuc
Berlin, Germany
2016

Since the mid-1980s Vutuc's work concerns itself with observing the (over)development of modern society and the privatization of public space; nature being conquered by concrete, concrete being conquered by the subversive act of skating. The work is based in nomadic movement through space and time, an endless sense of mobility, existence in between cities, countries, borders, worlds etc. Contested spaces, such as Fukushima, Detroit, Chernobyl, Israel and Palestine – strong symbols of ongoing human error and conflict, mistakes and misdirections in socioeconomic development. There is the documentation of this ever-shifting landscape (physical and symbolic) through analogue photography, publishing zines, mounting exhibitions, making music, drawing on walls, constant collaboration and generally non-stop action and movement; fragmenting, altering, rearranging reality over and over, as necessary.




05



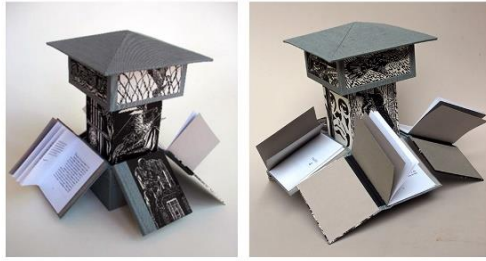
10 Years of Uzbekistan

Ken Campbell
David King - photography
London
1994

The portraits are printed in a frame, reminiscent of an icon, each superimposed with one or two other colours to give a two-tone effect. Some of the frames show where Campbell has fired staple guns into the zinc printing plates, so that the printing technique itself reflects the violence of the subject matter. Some of the photographs bear fragments of semi-obiterated text in Uzbek. Some bear the printed name of the person in the portrait on the facing leaf with brief political biographies of the individuals, including their fates (where known). This collaboration between the artist Ken Campbell and photographer David King takes as its starting point a book published by the Soviet State Publishing House in 1934 to celebrate a decade of Soviet rule in Uzbekistan. The original book was designed by the Russian artist and designer Alexander Rodchenko. A few years after publication, during Stalin's purges, several of the party officials, whose portraits appeared in the volume, fell out of favour and were removed from office. Rodchenko defaced his own copy of the book, obliterating the portraits with thick black Indian ink. Ken Campbell has said how he found this 'an absolutely terrifying image; not a comment on the Soviet system, more a comment on the nature of censorship and self-censorship - V&A Museum.

06		<p><i>Cabinet of</i> Roni Horn New York 2003</p> <p>This work is about the phenomena of appearance and disappearance. The book shows 36 head-shots of a clown. If mutability of appearance is integral to the phenomenon of the cloud – since dissolution or erasure is inevitable – the converse is proposed for the clown.</p>
07		<p><i>Temp Worker</i> Fred Rinne 2006</p> <p>Hand painted in gouache and bound by the artist, <i>Temp Worker</i> relates the story of an American temporary office worker's average day in the city. It begins: "My cheap plastic alarm clock shocks me awake with a hoarse death-rattle, having been drop-kicked across the room so many times. My vision blurred and taste buds numb, I breakfast on discount gruel. I read the news, as usual: ALL BAD! Judging by the news, one might think we live in a country of maniacs and ruled by werewolves! ... The office is a stinking joke. It is a whale hit by sharks, haemorrhaging paper all over the floor. ... The swine who wrecked this company will be lauded in the business press as a "tough, savvy, take-charge guy."</p>
08		<p><i>Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror</i> John Ashbery - poetry Richard Avedon, Elaine de Kooning, Willem de Kooning, Jim Dine, Jane Freilicher, Alex Katz, Larry Rivers - illustrations San Francisco, CA 1984</p> <p>A 1984 portfolio featuring the eponymous poem by John Ashbery, with eight images by his artist friends, layers allusion and inspiration in a cycle that parallels its circular format. Ashbery wrote his celebrated 1973 poem in response to Francesco Parmigianino's 1523-24 painting of the same name, a virtuoso self-portrait made bizarre by its precise depiction of a morphed reality. The cover - a stainless steel movie canister set with a convex mirror - offers the chance to see ourselves in this way, reinforcing recurring themes in the poem and echo the lines of text below. Avedon's photographic portrait catches Ashbery in an unplanned moment, once present, now memory. Rivers pictures the writer at work, with the typed fragment of another poem by Ashbery. de Kooning's mirrors a deteriorated clock face evoking time & dissipation. The work collaboratively illuminates the self, highlighting the vagaries of its individual moments of existence.</p>

09

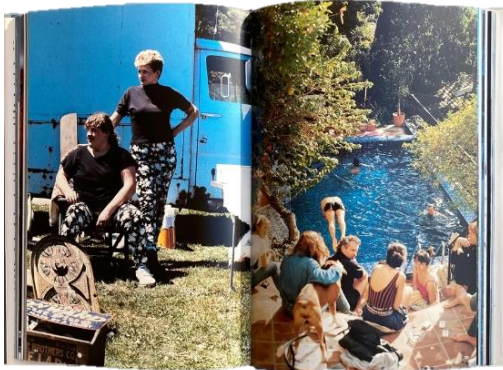


The Tower

Beth Thielen
California
2007

This edition of Linoleum prints and original writing was created at San Quentin State Prison and the now disbanded Women’s Program at the California Rehabilitation Center between 2006 and 2007. The artist began teaching in the California prison system in 1985 stating: “That program no longer exists, and the tolerance for this kind of program is increasingly threatened. ... By using the ‘craft’ of book arts, I’ve been able to draw into the program many women who might not otherwise investigate art. ... We are living in times of twisted priorities, of which our overflowing prisons are symptomatic”.

10



Adult Comedy Action Drama

Richard Prince
New York
1995

David Levi Strauss states, “An autobiography through words and pictures *Adult Comedy Action Drama* links together Prince's drawings, aphorisms, original photographs and photographs of other peoples' photographs. Light-hearted and funny, it describes and theatricalizes the visual 'stage set' of an artist's life, enacting all the comedies, actions and dramas with pictures alone. Prince's is a postmodern landscape, where one becomes what one beholds. ...[this] is a kind of self-portrait of the artist as individual consumer. Or one might think of it as landscape photography, where the landscape is consumerism ... Richard Prince, always the classicist, revisits a central concern of art from the beginning of easel painting: the display of constitutive possessions.” In their review of the book, The New York Times wrote, “Prince updates the old Modernist flirtation between the intellectual and the supposedly primitive borrowing conceptual and aesthetic strategies from Duchamp, Johns, Minimalism and the photography-as-painting movement.”

11



Portraits

Gerhild Ebel
Berlin, Germany
2001

Portraits from inside show real persons with their psychological characteristics. Letters stand for a specific feature, and number for the amount of this quality (1 little - 10 high) for example: sociability, intelligence, self-confidence, unconventionality, independence.

12



Those Frivolous Readers

Remember | Forget

Edidija Ciricaite

London

2015

Printed on sensual feather-light pages with a short essay on a sheet of discreetly light paper, concerning the representation of women readers. This work forms part of *(in)discreet* editions, an ongoing series of works based on the artist's research into representation of reading and books in contemporary and historic media. When collecting images of female readers, one cannot escape an overwhelming amount of eroticised reading women: half-dressed or with their clothes barely holding on; women draped across beds, sofas, armchairs or frozen in a blush, contemplating the contents of their naughty read. Their hair flows. Their hands are gentle. Their skin is porcelain. Their touch is sensual: the book is a tactile object; pages are frozen in the middle of movement. Their eyes are seductively lowered towards the book held at the height of the chest. A sensual reading female does not eroticise intelligence. What do such images say about the idea of reading? What do they say about the idea of the book?

13



Degas in Rome

An Imaginary Diary

Charles Hobson

San Francisco, CA.

2013

Hobson states: "Degas seems to have been aware of the interior growth he was experiencing in his early twenties. Between 1854 and 1860 he made eighteen self-portraits that reveal a deeply introspective nature. Five of these self-portraits have been chosen to represent Degas as he considers the challenges that his escort, the beautiful Rome, has set for him. The imaginary diary that I have written comes from the experience of standing, in Rome, where he stood."

14



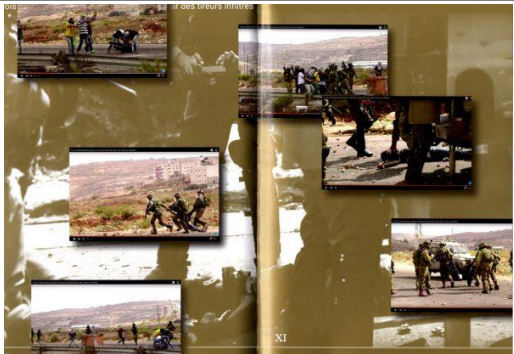
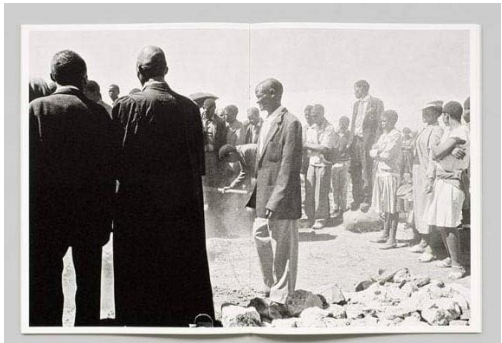

Language of her Body

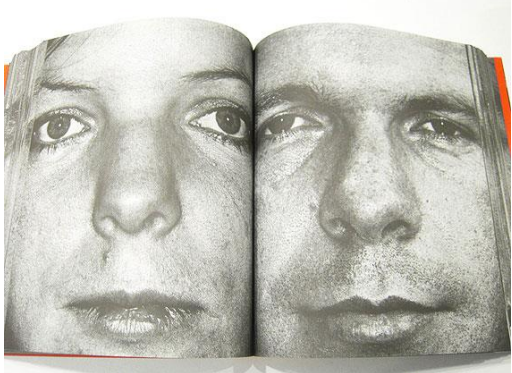

Amy Bloom, Derek Dudek, Keiji Shinohara

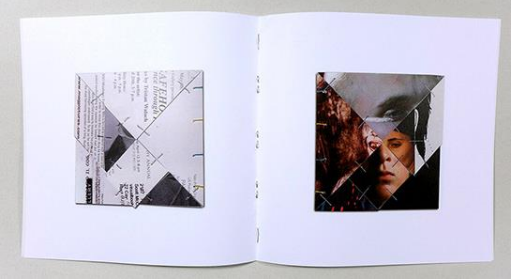


Middletown, CN



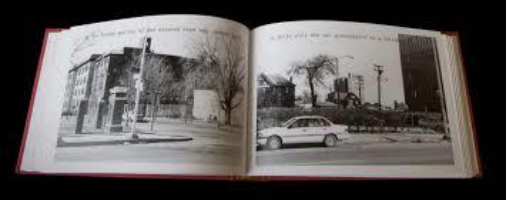
2003

Conceived as a visual lyric composed independently by photographer Derek Dudek and artist Keiji Shinohara. *Language of Her Body* explores the nude female figure re-interpreted through a landscape of sumi-e (Japanese brush painting). Text fragments are by Amy Bloom from her novel *Love Invents Us*.

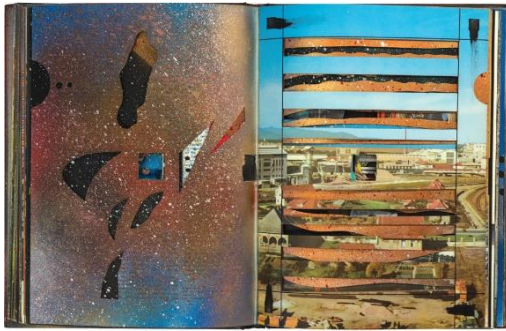
<p>15</p>		<p><i>House Without a Roof</i> Adam Golfer Brooklyn, NY 2016</p> <p><i>A House Without a Roof</i> concerns the strands of history connecting the Jewish Diaspora out of Europe and forced mass migrations from Palestine following WWII with the creation of the State of Israel. The book loosely traces the triangular relationship between Golfer’s grandfather - a survivor of Dachau, his father who lived on a kibbutz in the early 1970s, and the artist – caught between the membrane of histories that turned the oppressed into oppressors and residents into refugees, negotiating the splintered narratives of war and displacement between Europe, Israel/Palestine, and the United States.</p>
<p>16</p>		<p><i>Santu Mofokeng Stories</i> Santu Mofokeng - photography Lunetta Bartz, Joshua Chuang - editors Germany 2016</p> <p>This ground-breaking series of publications is the result of an unlikely multi-year collaboration between the photographer, bookmaker Lunetta Bartz, editor/curator Joshua Chuang and Gerhard Steidl. Together they have carefully mined and distilled over 30 years of work into 18 definitive ‘stories’ that are sharply edited, simply presented and richly printed in an oversized format that recalls the golden age of picture magazines. The stories range in subject from the zealous expressiveness found in ‘Train Church’ and ‘Pedi Dancers,’ and Mofokeng’s complex, long-form depiction of late-twentieth-century indentured servitude in ‘Labour Tenancies,’ to the contested spaces of ‘Robben Island,’ ‘Trauma,’ ‘Landscapes’ and ‘Billboards.’ The majority of the pictures appears here for the first time. Taken together, they reveal the achievement of a major artist of, and for, our times.</p>
<p>17</p>		<p><i>In Mexico</i> Helen Douglas (book artist) Edward James (text) Yarrow. 2014</p> <p>Douglas states: “This concertina opens in vibrant colour to reveal in progressive spreads of two, four and six pages a rich sensory exploration of Edward James’ surreal jungle garden Las Posaz, in Mexico. Within the book the abundant garden is interwoven on the page with decorative threads from Mexican embroidery and feather work. Patterns of leaves are echoed by cut paper craft whilst the delicate encrustation of flora and fauna is enriched with ancient</p>

		<p>Indian beadwork. Within the unfolding pages and intimacy of the book, the viewer can experience something of the unfolding immensity of the garden and its timeless fusion of earth and paradise, real and surreal.”</p>
<p>18</p>		<p>One Ken Ohara Taschen. n.d.</p> <p>In 1970 Ken Ohara created a body of work called <i>One</i>, for which he randomly selected people on the streets of New York and asked if he could take their picture. The resulting full-face portraits are larger than life, close-cropped black-and-white photographs that are as striking as they are unsettling. Ohara's subjects vary in gender, race and age but the portraits come together as a homogenous whole.</p>
<p>19</p>		<p>Souvenir Marshall Weber Brooklyn, NY 2003</p> <p>Souvenir is a deconstruction of Marion Rudiwitz’s 1969 High School Yearbook (from Francis Lewis High School in Fresh Meadows New York, on Long Island) into an old stamp album. Marshall Webber states: “One night early in 1999 I found the yearbook in a pile of belongings, which had been tossed onto the curb on Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village. It was an obvious eviction/ split/ quick/ death/ illness/ landlord-threw-stuff-into-the-street situation. I took the book home and my friends and I cruelly laughed at it for a few days. Then in an act of nostalgic piety and apology I spent the next three years tearing the yearbook apart and reassembling it into a vintage stamp album. <i>Souvenir</i> is a simulacrum of the acclaimed unique collage book of the same name. Souvenir is a talismanic antidote to revisionist attempts to diminish the legacy of the 60s; a decade which still holds a revealing ethical mirror to our present consumer culture’s brutality and arrogance. It recalls a time when college students in the United States had class-consciousness with interests different from those of their parents. The student class had idealistic goals beyond securing a super-sized version of their parent’s lifestyle.”</p>

20		<p>Face Book Scott McCarney Rochester, NY 2009</p> <p>The page design of face book is based on the tangram, a traditional Chinese puzzle consisting of seven flat shapes cut from a square which are traditionally rearranged to form figurative silhouettes. Here the shapes are cut from seven different exhibition postcards and stapled together to form a basic square. The title and dedication, "For all my friends", reference online social networking.</p>
21		<p>Long Story Short <i>Home is where the heart is</i> Philip (Phil) Zimmermann Atlanta, GA. 1999</p> <p>Phil Zimmermann: "The book is semi-autobiographical. It uses images of hands as a connecting motif throughout the book. I have always found hands to be particularly expressive. For some time, I had had the idea of taking on the challenge of trying to tell a story through the use of aphorisms or truisms. The collection, editing and positioning of these little clichés so that they told a narrative story took a great deal of time yet was fun in the way that a puzzle is fun. All of the images are from tiny sections of Look, Life, and other magazines from the fifties — the time period when I was born and was growing up.</p>
22		<p>Schlechte Wörter Peter Malutzki Ilse Aichinger - text Flörsheim, Germany 2009</p> <p>Ilse Aichinger's prose text, which first appeared in 1976, deals with language – its possibilities and its limitations. Malutzki made a series of 16 letterpress graphics for this text, inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale <i>The Emperor's New Clothes</i>. They are not intended as illustrations for Aichinger's text. Nonetheless, there is a relationship between Andersen's fairy tale and Aichinger's text that is not apparent at first glance. The fearful acceptance of an exaggerated description of non-existent finery in Andersen, and Aichinger's refusal to use better words, could be seen as two sides of the same coin. In the graphics, I reversed the conditions of the fairy tale. There is no naked Emperor, but figures who consist only of fabric/clothing. The collages are made on computer, using materials from 15th and 16th-century paintings.</p>

23		<p><i>The Louvre</i> Laurence Aëgerter Amsterdam. 2009</p> <p>This catalogue is a facsimile edition of a 1976 Louvre catalogue. 48 images are replaced by photographs that Aëgerter took during three visits at the museum, “an artistic quote”. She used a tourist camera and all the pictures she made during these three days. The well-known catalogue and the exhibited works look so familiar that it takes a while before you realize you find yourself in a cut and pasted-reality</p>
24		<p><i>Falter</i> Tricia Treacy Philadelphia 2013</p> <p><i>Falter</i> is a visual story inspired by time the artist spent in Japan in 1995, where moments of stuttering to find words for communication were common due to language barriers. Text was letterpress printed onto 35mm negatives, scanned and risograph printed with the words ‘falter’, ‘grasp for’, ‘stumble through’, ‘merged snapshots’, ‘uttering’, and ‘I stutter’ lasercut into selected pages.</p>
25		<p><i>Detroit City Map</i> Kati Rubinyi 2008</p> <p>Of the book, the artist, states: “I took a sequence of photographs along a route through the city determined by the crease lines of the unfolded map. The orientation of the folds is different from that of the city street grid, and so each time my path of travel crossed a street I took two pictures: one in the direction of travel, printed on the right-hand pages of the book, and the other in the opposite direction, printed on the left. Because the folds of the map align with the cardinal axes, the initial sequence of pictures on the right face north and those on the left face south. Turning the pages of the book, the reader can occasionally glimpse objects in the urban landscape on the right move closer, eventually receding into the distance on the left. The text weaves newspaper accounts of the three riots of the 1920s, 1940s and 1960s with literary sources, its point-of-view shifting over the course of the book.</p>

26



France I

John Eric Broaddus
New York
n.d.

John Eric Broaddus (1943 – 1990) was perhaps one of the most inventive and creative artists to approach the book form. He was a prominent figure in the New York City art scene in the 1970s and 1980s, creating books before the book form even had a suggestion of acceptance in the art world. He also created one-of-a-kind costumes that he wore out on the streets of New York and in iconic places like Studio 54. He was vibrant, outlandish, and did much to contribute to the world of artistic interplay in New York City of that time and *France I* reflects this as an altered book in a blue suede chemise. The original publication of *France I* is available to see to show what the unaltered book was like.

27



Dead Life Project

Clifton Meador
2021

Meador’s statement reads: “The Rijksmuseum’s collection is a staggering record of the display of wealth —and I started wondering about the sources of that wealth. Chartered in 1602, the *Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie*, referred to as the VOC was the first publicly traded corporation in the world, and was established to commercialize the highly profitable spice and silk trade with India and the East Indies by spreading the risk incurred by individual ships attempting the long and perilous voyage to the east. The VOC became a multinational company-state, perhaps the largest commercial organization in history, with its own military forces, fortresses, and quasi-independent city-states across South Africa, India, and the East Indies. The wealth lives on, and portraits painted in the Netherlands during this period point toward a problem with which we still struggle: capitalism makes some of us rich, but often at the price of enormous suffering by others. *Dead Life* recombines images of Dutch paintings of the 17th century to collapse these representations of an excess of material wealth into indistinct images. I color separated images of selected paintings, extracted different color information from each, and recombined those colors to make images where the issue of representation of wealth and identity is the main focus of the work.”

***Black Maps***

Timothy C. Ely
1997

This book is unique! Of it, Ely states: “Around 1996, I began a book called *Black Maps*. I began with black Arches paper, which proved to be the right weight but is so loaded with a black charge for color that the fiber has little strength. Almost none. I resized the paper with gelatin and methyl cellulose and painted it with black gesso and paste, making it the most sensuous paper I have ever worked on. I began to make these very colorful astronomical songs and diagrams and solar charts and devised several methods of bookbinding that are astonishing. I also used Philip Smith’s method of board attachment (the tongue and slot structure), which makes for probably the strongest methods known for attaching boards. The wood for the boards came from my grandfather’s stash of mahogany ply that he used to build fantastic boats. It was stored in our garage for decades and only came into my hands around the time I was working on this book. My father and I had overlooked it. I prized the book & look to it for inspiration.”